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The execution of the work in this reprint is creditable both to the editor and printer, and we are confident that their labor will be appreciated alike by the bibliophile and the historical student.

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13. — *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth*. By JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE, M. A., late Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. Vols. I. – VI. New York: Charles Scribner & Co. 1866.

ENOUGH of Mr. Froude's History has now been published to warrant us in forming a judgment of his qualities as an historian. It is true that the story of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, in some respects more dramatic and full of personal interest than any within the compass of the book, is not yet reached by the historian; but a careful reader of the volumes already published will not find it hard to foretell what Mr. Froude's treatment of the case is likely to be, with Mary as the bewitching type of the reaction that was to be fatal to her race, and Elizabeth as the unloving but conscientious step-mother under whose cold eyes the national life of England was to grow toward the manhood of the Commonwealth.

The period embraced by Mr. Froude's plan, including as it does the history of the Protestant Revolution in England, of the Catholic reaction under Mary, and of the compromise of extreme opinions under Elizabeth, is one of the most interesting and instructive in English annals. The reader in imagination carries on the story, and sees the inevitable oscillations of the pendulum of opinion from one extreme to another, till it seems to come to a standstill in that other compromise under William, which left England in politics without any fixed principle of action based on morals, and in religion with a form instead of faith. But the part already completed, treating as it mainly does of the process of reconstruction after a civil war of opinion, is full of pithy lessons for whoever reads aright. It shows the necessity of a definite firmness of policy, with moderation in action and wise concession in all non-essentials. It shows also the futility of all attempts to combine principles by their very nature deadly opposites. It teaches, in short, as history always does, that simple method for the solution of political problems whose application men always learn too late by the comment of their own errors.

As an historian Mr. Froude shows clearly the influence of the intellectual and moral training through which he has passed. Left apparently by the result of the politico-religious revival at Oxford without any

very resolved convictions, he is a master of casuistry, and often weighs a question with such a show of conscientious nicety, that nothing but the dust left in one side of the balances decides the turning of the scale. His method of treatment leads us sometimes to ask ourselves whether there is such a thing as positive right and wrong, and whether morals (as the name signifies) are really anything more than what is for the time customary. It is true he avoids the common mistake of applying the standard of one age to another; but this principle pushed too far may give rise to something worse than anachronism, and there surely must be a measure of conduct discreetly applicable to all times, unless the life of man on earth be something less coherent than a miracle-play.

We do not, however, regard Mr. Froude's History as one of those attempts at whitewashing in which the historian is swamped in the advocate, and truth is of less consequence than ingenuity. On the contrary, we think he has done a great service to those who desire to see events and characters justly in their mutual correlation, by disenchanting Henry VIII. from the beast of popular legend into the true prince he really was, and showing him to us as a man, and not a monster. He has done the same service also for Bloody Mary, giving us some true conception of her as a woman, and making her action the coherent consequence of her temperament, both mental and physical, and the influences to which it was subjected. His experience of the semi-Romish ferment of Oxford thought peculiarly fits him to understand and describe the popular feeling on both sides when the old religion and the new were struggling for mastery.

As we have before suggested, the apparent fairness of Mr. Froude in judging moral questions appears to us to be the result of a certain religious apathy, rather than of judicial impartiality of temper; and since events can never be dissociated from their moral causes and consequences, his lenient equity toward individuals strikes us as sometimes like a wresting to his own purpose that ethical law which, superior to all considerations of persons and nationalities, dominates in the affairs of the world. That he writes above and before all as an Englishman we do not regard as a defect, except where it leads him to take the empirical English view of the Irish character, and to generalize too thoughtlessly as results of race what may in much larger measure be fairly deduced from circumstances. Mr. Froude's style, without any of that vividness which springs from conviction, without any imaginative picturesqueness or fanciful point, is easy and agreeable, and his narrative has the freshness of interest which a casuistic turn of thought is sure to give by putting things in new lights and compelling the reader to be always on his guard lest he accept a sophism for a truth.